ies INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION SCIENCES

The Institute of Education Sciences conducts rigorous research on education programs, practices, and policies. We report a wide array of statistics on the condition of education, such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress, and disseminate research on education to practitioners and policymakers through the What Works Clearinghouse, the ERIC education literature database, 10 Regional Educational Laboratories and 10 National Research and Development Centers.

We are conducting this survey to enable us to better target research to the specific needs of education decision-makers. Each of the Institute's National Research and Development Centers has dedicated a portion of their efforts to conduct rapid response research projects that are intended to address issues of high relevance to education decision-makers. These projects need to be within the scope of each of the topic areas of the Research and Development Centers and must have national importance.

Your perspective as a Chief State School Officer is essential in helping us identify the most important issues for education decision-makers. We have identified possible research questions that could be addressed by the Research and Development Centers, and value your input as to the importance of these research questions and your suggestions for additional research questions.

I. Respondent Information

Which of the following best describes
your current position?

If other, please specify:

How often do you use education research
to inform your decision making?

If rarely or never, please elaborate:

II. Reports and Services Provided by the Institute of Education Sciences

Please indicate how often you use the following resources.

I use information provided by:

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, http://nces.ed.gov)

The Regional Educational Laboratories (http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/projects/labs.asp)

The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC, http://whatworks.ed.gov)

The Education Resources Information Center (ERIC, http://eric.ed.gov)

III. Importance of Education Research Topics

Your input is critical in helping us identify topics that are most important for researchers to address.

Listed below are a number of topics that could be addressed by one or more of our National Research and Development Centers. For each center, **please indicate the most important research topic** for improving education practice.

1) *Centers on Policies & System-Level Practices*

Leadership & Instructional Staff

Which issue is most important to address?

○ Identifying recruitment and retention practices that are potentially effective for hiring and retaining high quality teachers.

○ Identifying recruitment and retention practices that are potentially effective for hiring and retaining high quality school and district leaders.

○ Identifying teacher induction/first-year teacher support strategies that are potentially effective for improving the quality of beginning teachers.

○ Identifying district- and school-level management practices that are potentially effective for improving the teaching/learning environment.

○ Identifying state or local strategies that are potentially effective for attracting high quality teachers and administrators to work in low-achieving schools.

○ Other (please specify):

Assessments & Non-Curricular Interventions

Which issue is most important to address?

○ Examining the effects of high school exit exams on student outcomes (e.g., achievement, on-time graduation rates, drop-out rates).

○ Identifying non-curricular district-level strategies that are potentially effective for improving student outcomes in low-achieving schools (e.g., extended access to high school, extended day, extended school year, year-round schooling).

○ Identifying strategies for improving alignment of standards and assessments.

○ Validating assessments and accommodations for students with special needs (e.g., disabilities, English language learners).

○ Other (please specify):

2) *Center on English Language Learners*

Which issue is most important to address?

○ Identifying school-level practices that are associated with better outcomes (e.g., graduation rates, student achievement) for English language learners.

○ Identifying teacher professional development training that is potentially effective for improving teachers' skills for working with English language learners.

○ Other (please specify):

3) *Center on Postsecondary Education*

Which issue is most important to address?

○ Identifying non-curricular strategies that are potentially effective for improving student access to postsecondary education and training (e.g., merit-based scholarship programs, dual-enrollment programs).

○ Identifying strategies for improving students' likelihood of completing postsecondary education.

○ Other (please specify):

4) *Center on Early Childhood Education & Development*

Which issue is most important to address?

○ Identifying non-curricular early childhood policies and practices (e.g., universal vs. targeted pre-kindergarten programs, full-day vs. half-day kindergarten) that are associated with improved school readiness for at-risk children.

○ Identifying teacher certification policies that are associated with better child outcomes in early childhood education settings.

○ Other (please specify):

5) Center on Rural Education Support

Which issue is most important to address?

○ Identifying effective state- and district-level strategies for recruiting and retaining high quality teachers and administrators in rural schools.

○ Identifying effective strategies for improving student access to advanced-level high school courses (e.g., AP Physics) in rural schools.

○ Other (please specify): [   ]

6) Center on Gifted & Talented Education

Which issue is most important to address?

○ Identifying appropriate assessments for identifying and evaluating progress of gifted and talented students.

○ Identifying teacher professional development activities that are potentially effective for enhancing learning opportunities for gifted and talented students.

○ Other (please specify): [   ]

Thank you for completing this survey!

If there are any additional comments that you have regarding your responses, or if you would like the Institute to address areas that we have not asked you about, please provide them in the space below.

[   ]

Please submit this survey via email by clicking the Email button below, or save and email this PDF to Elizabeth.Albro@ed.gov. You may also print this form by clicking the Print button, and mail or fax the completed survey to the address or fax number listed.

If you have any questions, or would like to provide additional feedback, please contact:

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July 5, 2006

IC Clearance Official
Regulatory Information Management Services
Office of Management
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Potomac Center, 9th Floor
Washington, DC 20202-4700

Dear Sirs:

This letter is in response to your invitation to comment on the Student Support Services annual Performance Report, published in the *Federal Register*, volume 71, number 87, on Friday, May 5, 2006. A Task Force composed of SSS Directors around the country, along with other SSS Directors who have submitted comments, has composed the following list of suggestions to make the SSS APR more user-friendly and more appropriate for gathering and using data submitted by SSS projects concerning their participants.

1. Adding categories for "First Generation and Disabled" and "Low-Income, First-Generation, and Disabled" to Field 10 would enable additional data to be collected in this area.

2. In Field 15, there is not a category to capture those students who are prior year participants who return to post-secondary education. Many SSS students who drop out of school return after two years.

3. In Field 16, a category to capture SSS participants who are prior participants of another TRIO program is needed. Being a participant of a pre-college TRIO program would certainly be considered an indicator of academic need.

4. SSS programs in four-year institutions have students who transfer to other institutions and continue their program of study. Currently, SSS programs at four-year institutions are penalized for those students who transfer and continue enrollment at another institution. These SSS programs should be able to mark these students as "transfer" and not be penalized in retention because these students are, indeed, continuing their studies.

5. Currently, there is no clear direction for SSS programs in the area of graduation. Two-year colleges offer both certificate and associates degrees, and the APR captures those students who do, indeed, graduate with certificates. However, do those students who graduate with a certificate count as graduates for the program? There is no language in the regulations nor is there any in the law that says they do not; yet, it is common knowledge that the Department does not consider participants who graduate with certificates as graduates. If the APR allows

programs to report these students in Field 27, then these participants should be counted in the number of graduates.

6. Reasons for Withdrawal, Field 22, should have a choice for multiple reasons. Many times, students withdraw for several reasons, not just one.

7. In the instructions for Fields 29-34, there is a statement that says that "all new and continuing participants MUST participant in at least one of the services offered." **This is not true.** Many SSS programs do not offer academic instructional classes; therefore, their participants DO NOT participate in these academic programs. This statement may apply to Fields 29-57, but not to Fields 29-34 only.

8. In Field 12, Student Cohort Year, there are two spaces allotted for this data. However, choices 1-9 only have one space; should there be a 0 before each of the numbers 1-9 so that the two spaces allotted are used?

9. In Section 1, #8b asks "Uses Federal Grant Funds to Provide Grant Aid" and #8b asks "Receives institutional or other non-federal funds" with Yes or No responses to both questions. This is followed by the question, "If yes, indicate the dollar amount for reporting period." It is unclear if this question applies to 8b or 8c or both. This may need to be clarified on the form.

10. In addition, if you answered "NO" to an objective below, you must enter the approved objective number/rate in the space provided." How does one go about getting an "approved objective number/rate/" Did I miss this elsewhere in the documents?

11. In Field #14, directors can give the last date of service for the reporting year, but they cannot predict who will or will not become active the following program year. The note says "Blank is not a valid value. Please use 99999999 for participants still enrolled in the program." When directors complete the annual report in November, they may not know all of the students who will become active in the next program year.

12. Field #16 asks projects to collect data after the program year is complete. Also in this field, the final sentence reads "Please use the 'other' category sparingly." This is a contradiction of the note above that response #11 "is no longer used," since response #11 is "Other."

13. In field #17, programs are asked to report enrollment based on the number of credits a student is enrolled in at the end of the term, rather than the number of credits the student officially enrolled for by institutional standards. Once again this is a change in the reporting requirements previously put forward. In addition, this does not truly represent the students' intentions or financial aid obligations and may create a number of problems. If students enroll full time at the start of the term and then withdraw from all classes for health or other reasons (death in the family, etc.) It will look like they were never enrolled for that term. This does

not accurately reflect the student's status and may be misleading and confusing. If they drop only some classes, this may also create a problem. Previously programs were asked to indicate term credits attempted and term credits completed, which makes a lot more sense.

14. In Field #19, how are directors to code students who complete Advanced Placement credits in high school? They have not really been in a college environment without parental supervision, so when they come to college, this is a very different experience than when they take college level classes and are in high school. Should they be coded, "1st yr., never attended," or "first year, attended before." The lines are blurring here out in the real world where "swirling" is very real, and the categories aren't easily defined.

15. The APR should state that the programs would have one year to come into compliance on providing activity and contact data on students on an individual level, as was indicated at the US Department of Education workshops in March. Also, there is no way on the proposed APR for programs to report this data in aggregate form, if that is the only way in which they have collected the data over the past year.

16. There is also no information provided on how Prior Experience points will be calculated. I think this information needs to be universally available, not just for those programs that were able to attend the workshops in March.

17. The requirement that each project record minutes of service to each SSS student enrolled for twenty three (23) different services (to the nearest quarter hour) for the full calendar year seems unduly burdensome. Directors will have to upgrade their data management system for compliance with these new mandates and allot additional annual amount of staff time dedicated to record-keeping; it will be very difficult under level funding to do these things fiscally to collect this data.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this draft SSS APR. We look forward to your comments on these and other suggestions.

Sincerely,

Lucy Jones, Chair, SSS APR Task Force

Task Force Members: Ms. Lucy Jones, Rich Mountain Community College, Chair
                     Dr. Ronnie Gross, East Tennessee State University
                     Mr. Fred Williams, Purdue University, Calumet
                     Dr. Kathleen McNeill, Southern Oregon University
                     Ms. Julia Tower, Council for Opportunity in Education